

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00
NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03
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O 091356Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0447
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, IS, EG
SUBJ: EMBOFF VISITS RAFAH APPROACHES

REF: TEL AVIV 244 (NOTAL)

1. EMBOFF MADE FIELD TRIP TO RAFAH APPROACHES JANUARY 8
TO LOCATE AND DETERMINE EXTENT OF NEW SETTLEMENT ACTI-
VITY.

(A) THREE BULLDOZERS WERE LEVELING SAND DUNES JUST
NORTH OF THE COASTAL ROAD ABOUT A MILE WEST OF HARUVIT.

(B) THERE WAS LITTLE ACTIVITY AT THE KATIF B AND
KATIF C SITE JUST WEST OF NETZER HAZANI (KATIF A). THERE
WAS A RECENTLY COMPLETED BLACKTOP ACCESS ROAD TO THE
SITE, WHERE A CONSTRUCTION CRANE WAS SEEN. EMBOFF
SPOKE TO TEAM FROM ELECTRIC COMPANY, WHO WERE AT SITE
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TO PREPARE POWER LINES. INTERESTINGLY, NETZER
HAZANI ITSELF HAD SEVERAL UNOCCUPIED BUT COMPLETED HOUSES.

(C) A BULLDOZER CONTINUED GROUND-LEVELING AT PRIEL SITE,
WHICH IS EAST OF SADOT.

(D) AT YAMIT CONSTRUCTION CONTINUED IN STAGE 2 HOUSING AREA,
AND SEVERAL APARTMENTS ALREADY APPEARED TO BE OCCUPIED.

2. EMBOFF RAN INTO REPORTERS FROM JERUSALEM POST (ARENSTEIN) AND ISRAEL RADIO WHO LIKEWISE WERE TRYING TO TRACK DOWN NEW SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY. WE ALL AGREED THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF A MASSIVE MOVEMENT OF BULLDOZERS TO BEGIN WORK ON NEW SETTLEMENTS. THE REPORTERS WERE DISAPPOINTED THAT THE FRUITS OF THEIR SETTLEMENT-HUNTING EXPEDITION WERE SO LIMITED, AND ISRAEL RADIO REPORTER DECIDED TO PAD HIS STORY BY PLAYING UP PRESENCE OF AMERICAN EMBOFF IN AREA. (DAVAR ALSO PICKED UP AND PRINTED STORY.)

3. THE JERUSALEM POST'S (ARENSTEIN) REPORT ADDED THAT CONSTRUCTION CONTINUED--AS IT HAS FOR MONTHS--AT TALMEI YOSEF, IN THE SADOT AREA. (COMMENT: SETTLEMENT NUCLEUS OF THIS MOSHAV CONSISTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS WHO ARE TEMPORARILY RESIDENT AT SDE NITZAN.) ADDITIONAL HOUSES WERE BEING BUILT AT MOSHAV NIR AVRAHAM (20), MOSHAV NETIV HA'ASARA (12), MOSHAV UGDA (12), AND AT AVSHALOM REGIONAL CENTER AT SADOT (14). (COMMENT: MOST OF THIS CONSTRUCTION IN THE WORKS FOR PAST YEAR AND FUNDED UNDER FY 77/78 BUDGET.)

4. COMMENT: AS THINGS STOOD YESTERDAY, THERE WAS LITTLE OBSERVABLE UPSURGE IN SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY. SETTLEMENT BUSINESS APPEARED TO BE GOING ON AS USUAL. THE GROUND-LEVELING WEST OF HARUVIT AND NEAR NETZER HAZANI/KATIF A WAS IN OUR VIEW PREPARATION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SETTLEMENTS. HOWEVER, ISRAELIS CAN EASILY ARGUE THAT THIS WORK IS SIMPLY PREPARATION FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING SETTLEMENTS (WHICH ARE NOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ONLY ONE THIRD OF PLANNED SIZE). STEPPING BACK FROM THIS ISSUE FOR A MOMENT, THIS MOST RECENT SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY IS OBVIOUSLY AIMED AT ESTABLISHING SOME CONTINUITY BETWEEN THE MOST ISOLATED SETTLEMENTS IN RAFAH APPROACHES: I.E., PUTTING A SETTLEMENT BETWEEN NEOT SINAI (NEAR EL ARISH) AND HARUVIT; AND INCREASING THE ISRAELI PRESENCE AT KATIF (WHICH IS SURROUNDED BY ARABS ON ALMOST EVERY SIDE).
LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAND SETTLEMENT, WEST BANK, VISITS, TRAVEL REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV00330
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780012-1166
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780183/aaaacsnh.tel
Line Count: 102
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8eb46de5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 TEL AVIV 244
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3804771
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EMBOFF VISITS RAFAH APPROACHES
TAGS: PBOR, IS, EG
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8eb46de5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014